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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

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# Intelligence Memorandum

*The UN After the 26th General Assembly*

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14 February 1972  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
14 February 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The UN After the 26th General Assembly

The entry of representatives from Peking and the selection of a new secretary general have opened a new and uncertain phase in the history of the United Nations. Hard times are nothing new for the UN. The veto has often been used to stymie action by the Security Council; a fiscal crisis has been growing for a decade; and a lack of assertiveness on the part of the Secretariat characterized much of U Thant's tenure. But the particular character of recent events has brought into higher relief the intractable problems of creating an effective world organization.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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The Impact of Communist China

1. After the vote admitting Peking and expelling Taipei, institutional adjustments began immediately and have largely been completed. Nevertheless, the Chinese have been hesitant to participate in committees dealing with subjects with which they are unfamiliar, and in some of the UN-related specialized agencies the process of entry-expulsion will be lengthy, and perhaps difficult. As a result, there will be a residue of the "China problem" in the UN for some time. The Communists are expected to demand more and higher level Secretariat posts than the Nationalists were awarded.

2. The Chinese role has so far featured a blend of caution and assertiveness. They were reluctant to comment on the more esoteric subjects and showed interest in following correct procedures, but in the South Asian and disarmament debates they were outspoken. In the 26th General Assembly, Peking quickly tried to assume leadership over Third World members in opposition to the US and the USSR. How lasting an impression it made cannot yet be judged, and many members have noted that the Chinese, despite their past rhetoric on how the superpowers control the UN, did not hesitate to use their own veto privilege.

3. The most striking aspect of Peking's UN activity, however, has been the confrontation with the Soviets, stimulating the most vitriolic statements from both sides in over two years. The eruptions at the UN left some participants stunned and concerned about the extent to which such crossfire might interfere with orderly debate in the future. Peking and Moscow clearly are going to be on opposite sides of many future issues, and Sino-Soviet fireworks are therefore likely to be a regular feature of future UN proceedings.

4. The Chinese view the world organization as a prestigious, highly visible forum for pressing their policy and propaganda lines and for increasing

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Peking's world-wide influence. Their appreciation of the value of the UN forum was indicated by the selection of top-flight Foreign Ministry officials-- Vice Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua and Ambassador Huang Hua--to head the Chinese delegation. Peking also considers the terms of its entry an international endorsement of its claim to be the sole legal representative of China. Conversely, Peking hopes the expulsion of the Nationalists will spur other moves to reduce Taipei's contacts in the international community.

#### Advent of Kurt Waldheim

5. The circumstances leading to the selection of Kurt Waldheim as UN secretary general suggest that the declining effectiveness of the Secretariat during U Thant's ten-year service is not likely to be reversed, at least not soon. The choice of a successor came late in the General Assembly session, largely because the Soviets were reluctant to acknowledge that Thant was unwilling to accept an extension of his term of office. Although the critical balloting in the Security Council was secret, the USSR is believed to have vetoed Max Jakobson of Finland, the nominee deemed most likely to reassert the prerogatives of the Secretariat and to restore some semblance of administrative order.

6. Waldheim has been portrayed as a weak, indecisive person who is not likely to bring more vigor to the job of secretary general. In this connection it is worth recalling that Dag Hammarskjold was viewed with similar disdain by many when he was first selected in 1953. In Waldheim's case, there is some evidence to support predictions that he will maintain a low profile at least in the Secretariat.

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Although most contracts of

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top-level Secretariat officials are subject to renewal in March, Waldheim shows no inclination to take advantage of the opportunity to put his personal stamp on the makeup of his staff.

7. Waldheim's public statements on the role of his office have been cautious. He has hinted that he will make greater use of Article 99 of the UN Charter, under which he can convoke the Security Council, to promote international review of issues involving differences among the great powers. Waldheim's speeches have emphasized the potential of the UN for mediation, investigation of incidents, and observation of truces or borders. But whether Waldheim will attempt to use the good offices of the UN more vigorously than his predecessor is still an open question.

#### The South Asian Crisis

8. The crisis on the subcontinent festered for months before war broke out; yet there was no formal consideration of the issue by the Security Council until after the war had begun and no resolution passed by the Council until all parties had accepted a cease-fire. Without agreement among the great powers, the UN was in no position to take effective action to ease the crisis and head off hostilities. But if U Thant had used his prerogatives earlier, the UN might at least have helped illuminate what was happening in East Bengal. Even if the Soviets had stood in the way of meaningful Security Council initiatives, as they did after war was under way, the UN could have played a more useful role than it did under Thant. Soviet vetoes eventually forced the Security Council to use the "uniting-for-peace" tactic to transfer the issue to the General Assembly. But while that move circumvented the veto, Assembly resolutions are only recommendations and not binding on member states, thus making them virtually useless without prior agreement among the belligerents.

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9. The Security Council resolution passed when the war was effectively over permitted Vittorio Winspeare-Guicciardi of the Secretariat to visit India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. After a period at his post in the UN's European headquarters, he returned to South Asia at Waldheim's request. Prospects for greater UN involvement in the subcontinent in the future are dubious. Activities such as border observation will require the prior agreement of the local parties, and India is opposed.

10. The UN's humanitarian efforts during the crisis helped to deal with over 10 million refugees fleeing from the Pakistani Army's crackdown in East Bengal. The Secretariat demonstrated once again that it is able to organize international relief operations and to coordinate the contributions of UN and non-UN agencies. In East Bengal, however, the need to work through the Pakistani Government alienated the guerrillas and, shortly before the war began, led to harassment that curtailed UN relief efforts.

11. The problem of diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh and its future representation in the UN may limit the UN's role in rehabilitation efforts. But the UN is taking a hand in the immediate problem of returning refugees. Guidelines established by the Secretariat provide for UN assistance on a de facto basis without implying recognition at this time. The plans are that refugee assistance programs now operating in India will be phased out by June and will be replaced by a coordinated effort in Bangladesh that could serve as many as 30 million persons. The new programs will focus on rehabilitation and resettlement and will try to avoid the permanent camp atmosphere that has dogged the operations of the UN Relief and Works Agency in the Middle East.

12. The South Asian conflict again illustrates that if the UN is going to play a meaningful role in disputes between rival ethnic groups, it is going to

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need a more clear-cut mandate for action. The US backs a proposal for a UN high commissioner for human rights who would be empowered to investigate such conflicts, but the idea has not made much headway. The USSR maintains, for example, that the office would intrude on sensitive areas of national sovereignty. The Soviets obviously are chary of any plan that might open up the grievances of their many nationalities to outside investigation. On the other hand, a UN disaster relief coordinator might have been very useful in the wake of the tidal wave that devastated East Pakistan some months before the civil war. Such an office has since been set up.

#### Middle East Malaise

13. The 26th General Assembly provided a forum for the Arab governments to vent their frustrations over the unresolved issues of the June 1967 war. The debate, although at times embittered, left basically intact the Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967. The resolution--which sets the guidelines for a negotiated settlement--did survive Arab attempts to interpret it selectively as well as Communist China's refusal to accept it on the grounds that it fails to do justice to Palestinian aspirations. The Assembly debate produced a more one-sided vote than last year for a resolution unacceptable to the Israelis, but it also featured greater African involvement and African views not so completely in support of Arab contentions as before.

14. Peking's refusal in November to join the four-power talks in New York left open the role the Chinese intend to play in UN deliberations about the Middle East. If an agreement generally acceptable to the Arabs could be obtained, the Chinese would probably not want to be out of step. But Peking's support of the Arabs could make it even more difficult to get such an agreement. If a UN peacekeeping arrangement should become a central

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part of a settlement, China's past rhetoric suggests that it may complicate a problem the other UN powers have grappled with for years. China may find it difficult to align itself either with the Soviet position that the Security Council must fully control peacekeeping operations or the US preference for reserving a significant degree of latitude to the Secretariat.

#### Other Key Issues

15. Some of the UN's perennial preoccupations are not going to be treated in quite the same fashion in the future. The Korean questions before the General Assembly--whether to invite Pyongyang to join in the Korean debate unconditionally and whether to continue the UN presence in South Korea--were deferred early last fall. But Communist states are likely to push harder for unqualified North Korean participation now that Peking is a member, and they may think the time is ripe for heavier attacks on the UN role in Korea. Although Seoul has shown new flexibility in recent contacts with the North, the South Koreans continue to view the UN commitment as important to their security and their international status.

16. Colonialism received less attention at the 26th Assembly, but with Communist China on hand the prospect is for more contentious debate over issues such as the Rhodesian problem. In that situation the complex issue of the continued validity of UN sanctions against Salisbury--the first ever invoked by the UN--is at stake. On other African issues, such as South Africa's continuing refusal to relinquish control over the territory of South-West Africa, prospects are that China and the USSR will continue to vie with each other in supporting the Africans' aspirations and in impugning the West.

17. Membership questions will be prominent in UN discussions, in part because the entry of Peking has revived the idea of universality. (Actually the

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China issue involved rival claims to the same geographic area rather than an accession by a territory not already represented.) Possible admission of the divided states--Germany, Vietnam, Korea--and prospective applications from several ministates are receiving growing attention. The issue of divided states will be solved outside the UN by agreement among the great powers, however, and only the Germanies may be admitted in the next year or so. But more ministates could gain entry which would encourage meaningless Assembly resolutions backed by substantial majorities. Acceptance of the US-backed concept of weighted voting in the Assembly would reduce this prospect, but the USSR and China probably would not ratify a charter amendment which is so offensive to most of the less powerful countries. Japan and West Germany are in the forefront of several nations that want permanent seats on the Security Council, but the Communist states probably will oppose such moves unless a package deal of some kind can be arranged.

18. The UN's manifold fiscal problems could be eased by weighted voting; the major donor nations have opposed the most recent budgets as too large and unbalanced, but they have been outvoted each time. The bulk of the deficit stems directly from Soviet and French refusal to honor peacekeeping assessments in the early 1960s. The US has not viewed recent overtures from the "delinquents" as sufficiently responsive, although the French have made a special donation of nearly \$4 million without acknowledging any legal obligation to do so.

#### Areas of Potential Activity

19. The work of the 26th General Assembly tended to bear out earlier indications that during the 1970s the UN would be accorded a key role in some areas of increasing international concern. The Assembly reaffirmed its earlier decision to hold a Law of the Sea conference under UN auspices in

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1973. One of the topics to be discussed--utilization of resources on and below the deep ocean floor--could produce an agreement that would give the UN certain responsibilities for overseeing the exploitation of seabeds. Similarly, the 1973 conferees may create a new UN agency to police rights of passage through international waterways and to enforce complex regulations on fishing.

20. Although less susceptible to UN regulatory activity, environmental problems are to be aired at the UN Conference on the Human Environment slated for Stockholm in June 1972. As the first gathering of its kind, this conference has received a great deal of publicity, but--except perhaps in curbing maritime pollution--it is unlikely to result in agreements requiring enforcement. Several of the less developed countries oppose the establishment of environmental standards, fearing that conformity to such standards would be costly and might conflict with their ambitions to exploit their own resources. The East Europeans last fall began to pose a different sort of problem, threatening to boycott the conference because East Germany had not been granted official status. They may still stay away, but China appears inclined to participate.

21. The 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the recent complementary draft international convention on psychotropic (mind-bending) substances give rather tepid powers to the UN-related International Narcotics Control Board. The US hopes that a UN plenipotentiary conference on amendments in March will provide the narcotics board with more teeth. Recently, delegates of key Western countries reached agreement ad referendum with the US on a package of proposed amendments which would give the board more power to obtain information on trafficking in drugs and the right to limit opium cultivation and production in extreme cases of violation. A \$2-million US gift has sustained the new UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control for several months, and as

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a result of discussions last fall several other nations are now contributing. This should bolster and help coordinate the varied efforts of UN agencies to deal with the drug problem.

22. Several developments at the 26th General Assembly are likely to influence the UN's future role in disarmament matters, including the conduct of the 26-nation Geneva disarmament talks. The Soviets proposed a world disarmament conference which may prove to be a more viable propaganda ploy than their call last summer for a five-power nuclear disarmament conference. Although the concept was not endorsed by the Assembly, it will be reviewed at the 27th session.

23. The Chinese bitterly attacked the Soviet initiative, maintaining that it lacked specific provisions, such as no-first-use of nuclear weapons, necessary to convince the Third World that the super-powers are interested in meaningful disarmament measures. Their negative attitude probably means that the Chinese will seek to extract strong concessions before entering into the Geneva talks, a goal that received strong support at the Assembly. Peking is likely to want satisfaction not only on the content of the agenda, but also on organizational matters and participants.

#### Outlook

24. The Chinese Communist presence in the UN will inevitably lead to changes. For the first time in more than 20 years, all the powers are represented in the UN forum. In some situations this may reduce the freedom of smaller states to engage in petty maneuvering, but the initial experience last fall suggests that the US-USSR rivalry that bothered the UN during its first 25 years may be followed by an equally crippling rivalry between Moscow and Peking. Under these circumstances, the new secretary general, no matter what his leadership

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talent and skill at persuasion, is not likely to be able to make the UN an effective instrument for resolving international disputes in which the interests of the great powers are divergent.

25. Nonetheless, the breaking up of the bipolar world creates new opportunities for the UN to develop as a world organization, and there are many problems for which the UN is well equipped to supply at least partial answers. In particular, the 1970s are likely to offer more opportunities for upgrading the UN role in monitoring and enforcing international regulations and agreements. To accomplish these objectives, the great powers will have to bring their views into greater harmony; they will have to agree on financing the UN and its related agencies and on giving the UN specific responsibilities. It will obviously remain much more difficult to develop the UN's political functions and to persuade the larger powers to rely heavily on the UN in situations where their basic national interests are at stake.

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